

Word of the Buddha

According to the Pali Canon or Tripitaka
From Sri Lanka

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Buddhism's Message to you - No. 1

1. Anthropocentrism

The message of Buddhism is no more and no less than the down-to-earth success story of man. Of course, of the woman as well. It goes without saying. It is success here in this life and success in a religious or spiritual sense hereafter. This *homo sapiens* is undeniably declared to be capable of transcending all ills of life in the world by his own well-judged human endeavour. For this is what Siddhartha himself, as the son of a provincial Sakyan ruler of the Gautama clan,

achieved in becoming the Fully Enlightened Buddha. He was thereafter called *Sammā Sambuddha*. This was already six centuries before the birth of Christ.

Buddha's teaching unequivocally rejects the idea of a Supreme Divinity to whom the man in the world can go for succour, security and safety [*attāṇo loko* M.N.11.68]. The Buddha also rejects the idea of such a Divinity who determines and guides the destiny of man [*anabhissaro* loc.cit.]. This idea is expressed as the second among four major high-lighted axioms [*cattāro dhamm' uddesā*] or observations relating to the nature of the world. The others are: 1. The world is subject to constant change and is impermanent [*upanīyati loko addhuvō*]. 3. One cannot claim possession of anything in the world. One leaves them all behind at death [*assako loko sabbaṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ*]. 4. The world is insatiable in its needs. It is enslaved to greed [*ūno loko atitto taṇhā-dāso*. loc.cit.]. These were wisely re-invoked by the newly ordained young Raṭṭhapāla, in reply to the ruler of the land who questioned him, as promptings which led him to a life of renunciation [ibid.].

As the centuries passed by, in the eyes of his followers, the spiritual success of Siddhartha became overwhelmingly greater and greater. Before the dawn of the Christian era, the word Buddha and the person designated by the word had already broken through the boundaries of time and space in the world of thinking men of Asia.

His presence was made to be felt everywhere. He thus became the Buddha of Infinite Light or Amitābha [*Amita + ābha*]. He is in every galaxy or *Buddhaksetra*. He exists everywhere. He was thus elevated to this glorified position of omnipresence by man by virtue of the greatness of his self-achieved triumph of transference from the mundane to the transcendental.

He is also believed to exist continuously through time. He thus became the Buddha of Infinite Life or Amitāyu [*Amita + āyu*] as well. Thus came about the genesis of the great Buddha [Dai Butsu] AMIDA or INFINITE of the later schools of

Mahāyāna. This is the ascent to divinity as Buddha of the truly human personality of Gotama.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

001. It is one's own mind which gives direction to one's life, for success or failure. One needs keep constant vigil over it. A wholesome, loving mind alone entitles men and women in the world to inherit happiness. [No power outside man bestows it upon him.]. Wickedness of mind on the other hand, i. e. of thinking processes leading to evil words and evil deeds, always brings misery and disaster to mankind. [Dhammapada vv. 1 & 2].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 2

2. Transcendence - Passage from Human to Divine

What took place in the life of Siddhartha in becoming the Buddha is the possible transition in the life of every mortal, in the passage from the state of the mundane, i.e. the common life style in the world, to the transcendental state in Nirvana. It is in this sense that we use the word divine here. Nirvana implies a total absence of all that is distasteful in life in the world which is termed *dukkha*. *Dukkha* results from man's dissatisfaction with and his inability to adjust himself to the ever-present changing nature of the world he lives in. This is Buddhism's primary observation about the world, that it is constantly subject to the law of change.

This changing nature of the world or *anicca* [Skt. *anitya*] constantly leads man to a state of conflict, of conflicts unresolved: of possession and non-possession

[as well as dispossession], of gain and loss, of love and hate, of success and failure etc. In his inability and incompetence to resolve them, man constantly plunges himself into this self-generated misery called *dukkha*. Man generates it out of his own reaction to the world. It is not that the world thrusts it upon man. This state of misery or unsatisfactoriness does not exist in the world by itself. The Buddha knew that this realistic view of the world would not be readily acceptable to those who revel therein. It is that they deliberately turn their back upon it. For they are invariably inclined to grab and grasp [*Ālaya-rāmā kho panāyaṃ pajā ālaya-ratā ālaya-sammuditā*. M.N. I.167]

In Buddhist terminology, the pursuit of the goal of Nirvana is the moving away from or *nissaraṇa* of humans in the mundane plane [*lokiya*] towards transcendence and consequent immortality in *lokuttara*. It is a total transformation achieved here and now [*diṭṭh ' eva dhamme*], in this very plane of existence. One does not look up to death for the consummation of its bliss. It is in every sense liberation in this very life or *jīvan mukti*.

In Buddhist teachings, no single agent with divine power is conceded the credit of creating a perfect or imperfect world for man. Buddhism's primary interest is in the world which is man himself. Such a world exists with man and within man, in his own fathom-long body [*byāma-matte kaḷebare*]. In its birth, decay and death prevail [*Jāyati ca jīyati ca mīyati ca*]. Therefore it is indeed in a state of severe stress and strain [*Kicchaṃ vatā ' yaṃ loko āpanno*. D.N.II.30; S.N.II.5]. Its correction also lies in his own hands. [*Api cā' haṃ āvuso imasmiṃ byāmamatte kaḷebare samanake saviññāṇake lokañ ' c ' āhaṃ paññāpemi loka-samudayañ ca loka-nirodhañ ca loka-nirodhagāmani-paṭipadan ' ti*. A.N.II.50]. One cannot create and let yet another pay for the defects and sins of creation.

Man's salvation lies totally in his being able to step out of the world. Nothing short of it brings about his release [*Na ca appatvā lokantaṃ dukkhā atthi pamocanam*. loc.cit.]. Thus Nirvana is the highest achievement of world

transcending and it is man alone who can bring it about. It is literally 'world conquest'. None bestows it on him. It is achieved in this world itself, while being within this self same human frame. It is the triumph of mind culture which culminates in the acquisition of highest wisdom needed for this purpose.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

002. Constant brooding over misdeeds done by others unto oneself only leads to intensification of anger and enmity within. Clear the mind of such thoughts of abuse or assaults suffered, and you shall forthwith enjoy peace and harmony within your own self. [Dhammapada vv. 3 & 4]



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 3

3. Neither Grace nor Aid from Elsewhere

In Buddhism of the Theravāda tradition, guidance or assistance through an external divine mediator in the process of liberation is unhesitatingly and unequivocally denied. *Attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā*: Each one is one's own lord and guide. Who else could play that role? [Dhammapada vv.160 & 380]. *Attāno loko anabhissaro*: The world is without a protector. It offers no refuge. None presides over it to guide its destiny [M.N.II. 68].

To the Buddhist, there does not exist a transcendence of the mundane world to reach the divine through divine grace. Nor is such transcendence to be sought in a plane beyond this [either as *deva* or as *brahma*] which exists elsewhere, in a place which one seeks to attain after one's death. In Buddhism, the position of the human being is elevated above all other living things in the world on account of his vastly developed mind or brain, or by whichever name one would choose

to call this faculty [*manassa ussannatāya manussā*. VvA.18 and KhA.123].

Thus it is man himself who must perfect his faculties of thought and judgement [*citta* and *paññā*]. That is the real direction of human development in the area of spiritual growth. Humans are declared to be capable of bringing about this by their own well-directed endeavour and striving [*sammā vāyāma*] at a down-to-earth human level. The ability and the capacity to do this is necessarily the outcome of a long and sustained process of moral and ethical development. It is a higher rung [No. 6 = *sammā vāyāmo*] in the spiritual ladder of the Noble Eightfold Path or *Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga* in Buddhism.

Nos. 3, 4 and 5 of the said Path, i.e. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, as pre-requisites, are required to prepare man for these higher reaches of Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. This leads to the final liberation in Buddhism which one achieves through one's own realization [*sayaṃ abhiññā*] of the reality [*yathā-bhucca*] or the true and real nature of life in the world [*yathā-bhūta-pajānana*]. This alone fixes man harmoniously in his little slot of existence while he lives in the world. Thus liberation [*sammā vimutti*] in Buddhism implies perfect maturity of wisdom within oneself. In other words it is the liberation of the mind [*ceto-vimutti*] of its cloudy mantles [*āsaveh*] through the penetrative faculty of wisdom [*sammānāṇa* or *paññā*].

Man learns to view correctly the world he lives in, thus eliminating the resultant bonds which bind him more and more to it, in involving entanglements of being either attracted to or repelled by it. This happens through diverse channels of persons and property with which the humans develop numerous relationships. The living process of man in the world is a ceaseless continuance of such involvement and entanglement. Few do ever realize this.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

103. In this world, hating never terminates the hatred of one to another. It is the eternal truth that love alone brings about peace and concord. One must be heedful of the fact that all life ends in death. That awareness alone shall bring amity and concord among men. [Dhammapada vv. 5 & 6].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 4

4. The Universe and Man Therein

Life in the world, according to Buddhism, is not the product of a willed process of creation. The genesis of the universe is one thing, and the genesis of life therein is yet another. Life of man is held in Buddhism to be a bit more than mere externally animated matter. Life was not blown into man as into a clay image at any stage by any creator. Life of man has its own psychic content. This, which is referred to as *viññāṇa*, is personally different in each individual in terms of its own construction.

This life continuum consciousness or *samvattanika-viññāṇa* [M.N.II.262] extends forward through time and space and is also traceable backward by means of specially developed human faculties like wisdom of scanning former births or *pubbe nivāsānussati ñāṇa* [See also D.N.III.105 where it is referred to as *viññāṇa-sota* or stream of consciousness]. According to early Buddhist teachings of the Pali Canon, this is by no means a disembodied soul or a posthumous existence of the human in an astral form, floating about or roaming around in search of a human womb. Buddhist texts specifically declare that the assumption of the existence of such a state [often called by the name *antarā-bhava*] is gross error, resulting from the misunderstanding of words like *sambhavesī* and *antarā-parinibbāyī* occurring in Pali suttas

The grossness or fineness of the psyche, quality wise, as a life determinant of the human, bestowing happiness [*sukham*] or unhappiness [*dukkham*] on him {See Dhammapada vv.1 & 2}, depends on the life style adopted by a being during his entire *samsāric* sojourning [i.e. of the process of continuous births and deaths]. Thus while the world or the universe in which one finds oneself continues to grow or extend through time and space, any being who dwells therein could, by his own endeavour, so well perfect his or her life process, thereby bringing about the termination of this very phenomenon of mundane existence [*bhava-nirodhā jāti-nirodhō*]. This brings unhappiness of life to its total end.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

004. He who dwells, viewing the world as a source of constant happiness, and lacking in restraint of one's senses in responding to it, not knowing the limits of eating, and also lazy and lacking in initiative, such a person tends to perish as easily as a weak tree in the face of a strong wind. Whosoever stands up to the opposites of these, he stays firm and steady like a rocky mountain.

[Dhammapada vv. 7 & 8].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 5

5. Development: Moral and Psychic

Two important considerations emerge out of the Buddhist concept of consciousness or *viññāṇa* as the life continuum of the humans. Triumph of man in his spiritual elevation lies in his capacity to transcend all failings and frailties of life by taking one's own life under one's total command, with judgement and determination [*atta-sammā-pañidhi* Sn. v. 260]. With a knowledge and awareness

of what life really is, one handles with care one's responses to the world in which one lives. Buddhism declares these responses as being of inherently strong forms of attraction and repulsion. On the side of being attracted to dear and delightful things of the world [*piyarūpe rūpe sārājjatī*] are states of mind of varying intensity, referred to severally as greed [*lobhā*], lustful attachment [*kāmacchanda*] and covetousness [*abhijjhā*]. On the side of resistance or repulsion are hate [*dosa*], hostility [*vyāpāda*] and conflict or encounter [*paṭigha*]. Buddhist moral development must reflect a definite steering clear of these polarities.

Buddhism's basic message to its followers is a request to undertake a gradual process of self-discipline and self-culture [*bhāvanā*] to enable one, without a prayer to another, to handle wisely these responses to the stimuli of the world which swing in both directions of likes and dislikes. Thus, one has to react to the world without injury to oneself or to those around us [*neva atta-vyābādhāya na para-vyābādhāya*]. Utter disregard towards these considerations leads to collective [in the social sense] moral degradation and consequent social imbalances on the one hand, and on the other, to total personal corrosion, call it ethical, spiritual or whatever you will. Total personal culture, as Buddhism rightly insists on, based on self-confidence and self-reliance as indicated above, is indeed the way to ensure peace on earth and goodwill among men.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

005. To be worthy of the saintly life of monkhood, clad in dyed-robles [the word *kāsāva* used here never implies the colour of robes as yellow], one must spit out one's evil contained within. One must possess restraint and truthfulness and be totally disciplined. Anything to the contrary disqualifies one from being worthy of the dyed robes or being a monk in the true Buddhist sense. [Dhammapada vv. 9 & 10].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 6

6. Reality of Life: In Single or Multiple Spans

Life of man basically consists of five components: his body of flesh and blood [*rūpa*], with its built-in sentiency [with the capacity for perception, apperception and mental constructs or thought building] and his personal consciousness or *viññāṇa* [which is said to continue from life to life]. This second group, together with *viññāṇa*, goes under the collective name *nāma*. The resultant totality is called the Five Aggregates or *pañcakkhandha* and includes within it *rūpa* and the four subdivisions of *nāma* referred to above. They are 1. *vedanā* or cognitive awareness = perception, 2. *saññā* or apperception, 3. *saṅkhāra* or mental constructs and 4. *viññāṇa* or personal consciousness, together with its *samsāric* component [*saṃvattanika-viññāṇa*].

This group of Five Aggregates becomes a living reality when it is linked up, through our sense faculties, with the world around us. This stimulates us into activity of body and mind all the time. The activated process of response within humans goes under the name of *Pañcupādānakkhandha* or Five Aggregates of Grasping. This co-ordinated process of activity in its totality, with diverse relationships with the world, is what we briefly call life. This is perhaps why the Buddha chooses to call our fathom-sized body [*byāma-matta kaḷebara*] the world [*loka*], resetting as it were, our meaningfully relevant world, within ourselves.

Whichever way it works, to our development or to our detriment, socially or spiritually, it is our responses to the world we live in which gives dynamism to our lives. In Buddhist teachings, this very process of living is contained within what is called *upādāna* or grasping [i.e. grasping at or rejecting objects of sensory stimulation in the world]. This is what contributes to the continuity and

continuance of life [*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*], both here and hereafter. This undeniably and emphatically establishes the fact of birth again after death, i.e. *punabbhava* or rebirth [.. *mīyati ca cavati ca uppajjati ca* in succession. See D.N.II.30; S.N.II.5].

We would consider any attempt to explain these three words *mīyati* [= dies], *cavati* [= passes away] and *uppajjati* [= is born] as processes taking place within or during a single life time of a person to be approximating to a veiled rejection of the basic Buddhist teaching of *saṃsāra* which gives the life of humans a vast dimension extending through infinite time and space [*anamataḡḡāyaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro pubbā koṭi na paññāyati* . S.N.II.178 = Infinite, O monks, is this life process. Its first beginnings are not discernible].

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

006. Being unable to make correct assessments with regard to what in the world are truly worthy and wholesome [*sāra*], one never acquires or ever come to possess what is wholly and truly substantial. This is the outcome of their deluded mind [*micchā-samkappa*]. Those who act conversely arrive at what is truly worthy. [Dhammapada vv. 11 & 12].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 7

7. What Propels This Life Process: As Buddhism Sees It

The process of grasping at things of the world or *upādāna* as the life generative force results both from wanting to possess as well as the insistence to

reject things of the world. This is on account of our inborn greed or *lobha* and hatred or *dosa* which are therefore rightly referred to as roots of evil [*akusala-mūla*]. The resultant activities of these are referred to as acquiescing [*anunaya* M.N.I.191] and resisting [*paṭigha* M.N. I.109]. This in effect produces limitless gratification of sense desires which are piped into us through our sense organs. Buddhism advocates restraint and discipline with regard to this [*indriya-saṃvara* and *indriyesu guttadvāratā*]. Guarded and restrained use of sense organs, referred to as *indriya-saṃvara* or *indriyesu gutta-dvāratā*, is held in high esteem in the religious culture of the Buddhists.

This in a way is similar to, though not the same as the concept of 'Delaying Gratification' presented by Dr.M.Scott Peck in his THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED, p.18. [A Touchstone Book published by Simon & Schuster]. His position is briefly summed up as: 'It seemed to me, I said, that one hour of pain followed by six of pleasure was preferable to one hour of pleasure followed by six of pain.' Our position is: Face the challenges and temptations of the world, mindful of the consequences or the price one has to pay [*ādīnava-dassāvī*]. Then accept the less damaging choice. Such rejection, with a clear awareness of the possible damage and disaster, in the Buddhist way of thinking, is by no means repression or suppression.

This combustive process of the mind of yielding and resisting, in our very living process, also goes under the name *anurodha-virodhaṃ āpanno* [M.N. I.266]. This is based on the primary and fundamental law of likes and dislikes which is characteristic of humans [*piyarūpe rūpe sārājati appiyarūpe rūpe virajjati*. Ibid. = One gets attracted to objects which are delightful and gets repelled by those which are loathsome.]. This process of grasping is done or takes place on account of a self-crystallized deceptive notion of I and mine which is held by every being. The human mind is said to spin around this [*ahamkāra - mamimkāra - mānānusayā* M.N. I.486].

Buddhism calls this the mistaken notion of personal self or *sakkāya-ditṭhi*

[Also *atta-vāda* or *atta-vāda-upādāna* M.N. I.137]. A continuous set of psycho-physical processes which are at work in the life of the humans is mistaken and held as an independently functioning and enduring 'finished product' which exists by itself. For many people, the idea of a soul or *attā* [Skt. *ātman*] as something unchanging and as something untarnishable and uncorruptible is a convenient peg on which to hang these volitional processes of living as thinker as well as doer. According to Buddhism, this notion of self fouls the very process of living this life because of its productive evils of greed and hate, and contributes to the cumulative life-generating substratum. This is what we call ego or self-hood encumbrances [= *ahaṃkāra-maminkāra-mānānusaya*]. Until final liberation in Nirvana, man is obsessed with this notion. In the total destruction of this ego, one terminates the very process of life production [M.N.I.486].

In Nirvana this process of grasping or *upādāna* ceases completely. Hence Nirvana comes to be called *anupādā-prinibbānaṃ*. After the attainment of Nirvana, one still lives in the world, as did Gotama from the age of thirty-five to eighty. So did other disciples of his, both male and female. They were psychically alive, as much as physically, but untainted by the mundane process of grasping at things of the world. This, they refer to as being *tiṇṇo loke visattikam*, i.e. crossed over from the world without involvement.

As arhants they go through states of musing, as did Venerable Maha Kassapa on his return after his mid-day meal, but without any grasping or involvement [*Jhāyati anupādāno katakicco anāsavo*. Thag. v.1061]. It is for this same reason that the Buddha maintains that once a disciple is liberated [*vimuttacitta*], the individual consciousness of such a liberated one [*tathāgata*] shall not be traced by anyone [*nādhigacchanti* M.N.I.140]. He asserts further that even in this very life [*diṭṭhe' va dhamme*], let alone after death, his individual consciousness [*tathāgatassa viññānaṃ*] shall not be traced as abiding in or resorting to any single subject or object [*idam nissitaṃ* loc.cit.].

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

007. A roof with a defective thatch lets in rain into the house. Likewise, lustful thoughts pierce through into an uncultivated and uncultured mind. While a perfectly thatched roof likewise lets in no rain into the house, a fully cultured and developed mind admits no intrusion by lustful thoughts. [Dhammapada vv. 13 & 14].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 8

8. Genesis of Human Unhappiness or Dukkha

This is the way in which the Buddhists are primarily called upon to view the world, that all conditioned things of the world are subject to the law of change [*sabbasaṅkhāresu aniccānupassī* S.N. V.345]. Only the state of Nirvana, which is a Buddhist's final aspiration, lies beyond and outside this law of change. It is the invariability of this law of change on the one hand, and the inability of the mundane human mind to grasp it as such on the other, which bring about the genesis of *dukkha* or unsatisfactoriness in life. The things we choose to possess and the things we choose to reject, both do not stay where we command or expect them to be. It is this slow adaptability of the human mind to cope with the fleeting nature of the world, and its own lack of reconciliation to this change which underlie the genesis of *dukkha*. Our grief over life's normal processes of decay, disease and death are all part of this chain.

Thus *dukkha* comes in the wake of the invariable law of change or *anicca* [*anicce dukkhasaññī*. *ibid.*]. These two, the world's invariable changing nature and the lamentable inability of each one of us to realistically cope with it, together make us feel miserably selfless and helpless [*anatta-saññī*]. Where do we have a self with a command over ourselves? Are we then to appeal to a third party to act

as an intermediary between two contending segments of this down-to-earth human? We are told that this triple concept of *tilakkhana*, or *anicca dukkha anatta*, a Buddhist has to know and fully comprehend for his deliverance from *samsāra* or the painful process of recurrent existence. These are packed together under *cha vijjā-bhāgiya-dhamma* or six knowledge-builder-factors. [ibid.]. It is part of the essential wisdom which one has to cultivate and acquire.

It should become clear that in Buddhism this idea of *dukkha*, whether one translates it as unsatisfactoriness, pain, suffering or ill, is not something which stands in the world in isolation, all by itself. It does not exist in the world, apart from the human as the experiencer. It is indeed part of human life, brought about through physical or mental maladjustment. *Dukkha* exists within man's own existence. It is the product of his invariably maladjusted living process. For man to be at ease and at peace, and to find everything in life to be satisfactory [*santam paṇītam*], he must get a perfect docking-in-space with himself and the world he lives in.

He must fully comprehend three things in logical succession [See M.N.1.232 f.] which were referred to above as the life's way or the three characteristics of life or *ti-lakkhaṇa*. They are 1. the fleeting and transitory nature of all things in the world [*anicca*], 2. the invariability of human dissatisfaction in the face of this change [*dukkha*] and 3. the consequent reality that nothing in human life has mastery over itself [*anatta*]. Viewing life from this angle [*tilakkhaṇam ropetvā vaḍḍhetī*] is a must for every Buddhist, for his moral and spiritual growth. In being correctly adjusted to the world in which one lives, one becomes invariably happy here through his own achievement. That would be Nirvana here and now, in this very life. Like a space shuttle well-fired into outer space, men and women shall thereafter be in orbit for perfect landing in Nirvana where no *dukkha* exists..

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

008. An evil-doer grieves both here in this world and in the life after. Seeing the evil of what he has done, he grieves and bemoans. On the other hand, he who has done what is wholesome rejoices in both worlds, here and hereafter. He rejoices immensely, seeing the goodness of his deeds done. [Dhammapada vv. 15 & 16].



Buddhism's Message to You - No. 9

9. Tilakkhana or the Life's Way

The Buddhist world view insists: 1. That things in the world are of a transitory and constantly changing nature or *anicca* [Skt. *anitya*]. In the face of calamitous changes like earth quakes, floods and fires which occur all over the world, and death-dealing disasters like wars and famines which we witness everyday, is man still expected to believe in powers that hold things together in the universe perfectly well and protect the interests of man down on earth? 2. That this breakdown of the expected constancy and permanence leads to invariable dissatisfaction with the world and consequent frustration [*dukkha*]. 3. And that these two together leave the worth of human life at a very low ebb, without mastery and without command over anything in life that befalls man [*anatta*]. This is the basic teaching of *tilakkhana* or three characteristics of all that is in the world. This in brief is a summing up of the total Buddhist viewpoint with regard to our relationship to the world in which we live.

This must invariably lead any sensible person with an acceptable degree of sanity and good judgement to a complete rejection or to an acceptance with healthy caution of what we, by virtue of being human, appear to inherit in this world. He should do this, acquiring a dignified detachment, preferring and opting for the transcendental achievement in Nirvana which is well beyond the mundane. This Nirvana is something which is definitely attainable via discipline,

through personal self-detection, self-correction and self-adjustment, possibly in this very life. But if it is not totally accomplished in this very life, one needs to continue the progression in one or more births to follow. This is by no means a pessimistic outlook. It is one of honest realism and hopeful planning, like a well planned flight into outer space, even unmanned, but with near-total success to begin with, here and now.

Its results are no less real than ordering corn-flakes or porridge for breakfast. Choose it and insist on having it, putting into it the required energy and application. In consequence of this and on achieving it, one would live a totally enriched life while on earth, with no need whatsoever for consummation after death. Once attained, its enjoyment is not in a life beyond this. This is what the Buddha himself and all his enlightened disciples, male and female, achieved in their life-time. This is definitely the stand of the Theravāda tradition. More details, both descriptive and prescriptive, may be had on application.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

009. An evil-doer is consumed in both worlds, here and hereafter. He grieves over the fact that he has done evil. Such a person grieves exceedingly, having been dispatched to a birth in a lower degenerate state. He who has done ennobling deeds [*puṇya*] rejoices wherever he is born. Gaining birth in a blissful state, he rejoices over the goodness of the deeds he has done. [Dhammapada vv. 17 & 18].



10. Towards Spiritual Growth: From the First Steps

Buddhism insists on the correctness of vision [*sammā ditṭhī*], i.e. of world-view and outlook on life, as the first step in its path to liberation. This path which is referred to as the Noble Eightfold Way [*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*] is therefore heralded by correct vision. With a distorted or incorrect vision [*micchā ditṭhī*] of the world and of man's place therein, as to who saves whom and how, no spiritual path of redemption can be recommended or undertaken. Saviour after saviour may come down to earth [*avatār* = descent] as manifestations of the divine, with promises of redress and redemption, but the correction, according to Buddhist thinking, must necessarily lie with the men and women themselves [*suddhī asuddhī paccattaṃ* Dh. p. 165 = One's salvation lies in one's own hands]. No one brings about the purity of another [*nāñño aññaṃ visodhaye*. Ibid.].

There are two basic factors which contribute to the acquisition of this correct vision. Since our concern is primarily with the Buddhist way, there is no denying that it must be had through Buddhist sources, i.e. scriptural tradition or sources with doctrinal authority. This is referred to as the initiation and intimation one gets externally from others [*parato ghoṣo* M.N. I. 294]. It is also referred to as 'having access to the good doctrine' [*āgato imaṃ saddhammaṃ* M.N. I.46]. This has to be necessarily nurtured further through one's own analytical scrutiny and examination [*yoniso manasikāro* M.N. I. 294].

To us, this correction of view is as vital and serious as the corrections made to the Hubbell's Space Telescope, undertaken by the U.S.A. a few years ago. The source of error must be detected. The whole world knows today what the correction to the telescope meant to every seeker of knowledge. It matters much less as to who generated the error, or how much compensation had to be paid on that account. True visibility had to be achieved, like seeing the fire-flies in Tokyo if the telescope was mounted in Washington D.C. Man has, likewise, to perceive all the limitations of the believed-to-be glamorous life that he is compelled to accept as a generous gift. It is he who has chosen to cling on to it, without

realizing that in reality it is his own creation and that he is caught up in his own web. Thus it is indeed the true comprehension of this reality or the understanding of the true and real nature of this life [*yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti*], which enables the humans to disentangle themselves from the tangle of life.

This solid spiritual foundation is seen to be thereafter correcting the modes of one's thinking [*sarikkappa*] in the direction of both liberality, i.e. willingness to let go [*nekkhamma*], materially and psychically and the surrender of hostility and violence in one's attitudes and aspirations [*vyāpāda* and *vihimsā*]. These two, we believe, form a group and together serve as pre-requisites to the regulation of social morality in word [3= *vācā*], deed [4= *kammanto*] and livelihood [5= *ājīvo*]. They work indeed with collective unity.

Then it will be seen how item No.6 of the Eightfold Way, i.e. *sammā vāyāma* or right endeavour works on a higher plane of transcendent aspirations of spiritual purification.

No. 7 as right mindfulness [*sammā sati*] brings about the final stage of the way as No.8, viz. right composure or tranquility of mind [*sammā samādhī*]. It is this which produces the required wisdom [No.9 = *sammā ñāṇa*] which leads to final release in *sammā vimutti* as No.10.

A Thought from Buddhism

For you to dwell upon

010. If one keeps reading and reciting a great deal of scriptures, but through one's own neglect, never lives up to them, such a one will not be worthy of discipleship within the Buddhist Order. He is like a cowherd who only keeps counting the heads while guarding cattle owned by others. But the one who lives in accordance with the Dhamma, i.e. the teachings of the Buddhist creed, although he utters only a little of it, gets rid of his greed, hatred and delusion. Wisely liberating his mind, he clings to nothing here or hereafter. Such a one is a worthy

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disciple of the Buddha [Dhammapada vv. 19 & 20].

